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International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

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Agenda item 8
Comprehensive review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

Summaries of panel discussions

Note by the Secretariat

Addendum

Panel three
Role of culture in the sustainable development of small island developing States
(Tuesday, 11 January 2005, 3-5 p.m.)

Summary of discussion prepared by the Chairperson

1. Plenary panel three discussed the role of culture in the sustainable development of small island developing States. The Panel was chaired by Rachmat Witoelar, State Minister for Environment of Indonesia, and moderated by Dame Pearlette Louisy, Governor-General of Saint Lucia. To facilitate the intergovernmental dialogue, the Panel began with a number of presentations: Philippe de la Hausse de Lalouvière, Chairperson of the National Heritage Fund Board of Mauritius, spoke on the theme "Integrating cultural heritage into sustainable development in small island developing States"; Adi Meretui Ratunabuabua, Principal Cultural Development Officer, Department of Culture and Heritage at the Ministry of Fijian Affairs, discussed the theme "How to safeguard, enhance and promote small islands' tangible and intangible cultural heritage"; Ralph Regenvanu, Director of the Vanuatu Cultural Centre, talked about the theme "Community management of cultural heritage, resources and education"; Keith Nurse, Senior Lecturer at the Institute of International Relations, University of the West Indies, Trinidad and Tobago, spoke on the theme "The cultural industries and sustainable development in small island developing States"; and Sidney Bartley, Director of Culture at the Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture of Jamaica, covered the theme "Aligning culture with trade and other public policies for sustainable development".

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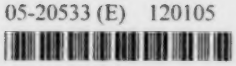

2. There was general agreement that culture has emerged as a key issue in the follow-up to the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and sustainable development in general. Culture was in fact identified as the fourth pillar of sustainable development. It was recognized that island culture and heritage provide important pathways to sustainable development through such things as sustainable tourism, traditional knowledge, music and festivals. Cultural identity and cultural heritage are fundamental in advancing sustainable development in small island developing States; indeed, development can only be truly sustainable if it is based on and grows out of cultural identity.

3. There was broad support among delegations for a new international convention on cultural diversity. It was noted that cultural exchanges nourish and develop cultural diversity and cultural identity; they also combat misunderstanding and prevent extremism.

4. Many delegations supported the protection of cultural heritage and cultural diversity, and additional resources for the strengthening of national and regional initiatives that have this aim. A number of delegations and major groups called for the preservation of indigenous and local languages and the teaching of culture and traditions in national education systems. Moreover, it was felt that small island developing States need to influence the content of broadcast media so that positive images of small island developing States cultures are portrayed. It was noted that the transmission of cultural traditions to youth helps build a resilient society.

5. Some delegations called for national cultural policies and legislative frameworks to support the development of cultural industries and initiatives in such areas as music, art, festivals, theatre, film and cultural tourism. Viable commercial cultural industries can nurture social cohesion and reinforce national identity. There is a need to strengthen cultural institutions and industries in small island developing States for national and regional development and to achieve international competitiveness. Such institutions and industries are viewed as areas in which small island developing States have a comparative advantage and which can be used to build up social and economic resilience. Culture is a major source of protection for small island developing States to absorb the external shocks of globalization.

6. Participants identified the following areas for priority for action:

- Involve communities in policy-making to safeguard their cultural heritage, including identifying what deserves protection and who owns it.
- Improve the management of cultural and natural heritage sites and ensure the accessibility of such heritage to all and its cost-effective maintenance.
- Develop partnerships between Governments and civil society for sustainable heritage management.
- Support and strengthen community capacities in resource management and governance.
- Develop programmes to record traditional knowledge and preserve customary cultural values, traditions and practices.
- Teach and transmit traditional community values and associated local and indigenous knowledge in basic education.

- Record and document indigenous languages as a means to support their systematic incorporation into school curricula and encourage publishing in indigenous languages.
- Build capacities in cultural areas through education and training in the arts, arts administration, heritage management and cultural entrepreneurship.
- Invest in cultural industries to generate new and indigenous forms of employment and exports, to aid in the diversification of economics, and to reinforce and expand cultural confidence and ties with overseas communities.
- Strengthen consultations between Governments and cultural industries in order to align government policy on culture and trade, industry, tourism, education, intellectual property protection and other sectors.
- Protect the intellectual property of small island developing States against piracy in the music, publishing and other creative industries, and build the capacity for rights management and patents, trademarks and copyright administration in small island developing States to protect all forms of creative innovation and raise public awareness of those issues.
- Improve institutional capacity for the advocacy, promotion and marketing of cultural products, services and intellectual property, including copyrights.
- Improve access to capital and credit, in particular in the areas of development financing and market development grants for small and medium-sized enterprises and the establishment of culture support funds in small island developing States regions.